

From: ILPI
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 11/21/01 9:13am
Subject: The MSFT settlement is absurd

The proposed settlement with Microsoft is absurd for many reasons. Here are just a few, in our opinion:

1. Where is the PENALTY? Microsoft illegally stole/won the browser market through anti-competitive practices. What is the penalty?

2. They are still up to the same practices. Microsoft no longer supports Java, a widely accepted language supported by their arch-rival Sun. Microsoft did so under the spurious claim that Java is an extreme security risk while their alternative implementation of ActiveX (long ago rejected by the free market) is even more so (remember, this comes on the heels of a lost court battle over MSFT's attempts to co-opt and bastardize the Java language in violation of their licensing agreement). Now, all but the most tech-savvy users, a small minority, will have the knowledge or time/effort to add Java support to their machines. In fact, Microsoft products are such large security risks that the Gartner Group recently recommended that Microsoft IIS users immediately migrate away from that platform.

Likewise, MSFT is leveraging their monopoly to force the market over to subscription-based services under the banner of .Net. .Net was not something the market requested. Users did not ask for mandatory leasing of their software and operating systems. Most users upgrade when they believe the newer software gives them an advantage; MSFT has realized that word processors etc. can't get any more feature-bloated and that upgrades won't drive their bottom line. They wish to milk the cash cow forever by forcing their captive audience into a subscription-based model. Microsoft is forcing this upon them by virtue of its monopoly position; most other users have no other choice but to give in to this extortion.

MSFT is also leveraging their monopoly to disingenuously convince its users that they must subscribe to Passport/Hailstorm. This requires users to divulge personally identifying and sensitive information which will be stored on MSFT's "secure" server in order to take advantage of the OS features.

Want some more? MSFT, for no apparent technical reason, decided to do away with the standard plug-in feature of browsers in IE 6. This instantaneously removed Apple QuickTime and Real Media players from the IE browser unless the savvy user knew what workarounds were required.

3. Their newly announced private "settlement" of antitrust cases

allegedly features a penalty of "free software and computers to more than 14,000 of the poorest U.S. schools over five years". This is not a penalty, it is a REWARD. This will give them an incredible amount of ammunition in finally dislodging Apple from the education market once and for all. The settlement should be MONETARY with schools free to make their own choice about computing decisions free from the Microsoft hegemony. And if this settlement was to acknowledge unfair practices, maybe forcing MSFT to buy the school whatever Linux and Apple products they wanted instead would be even more fair.

The list goes on, but we'll end here to keep this letter relatively short.

Regards,

The ILPI Support Team

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